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Hill-tops

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Henry Bryan Binns have been
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Hill-tops

Henry Bryan Binns

///



Jonathan Cape, Eleven Gower Street
London ❧ ❧ MCMXXI

By the same Author

The Free Spirit

November

April Nineteen-fifteen

The Adventure : a Play

The Wanderer

The Great Companions

Freedom as Creative Power

A Life of Walt Whitman

Abraham Lincoln

Walt Whitman and his Poetry

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Part I

Hill-tops

1. Faith

NOW I make an end of doubt
beginning what I dare,
Strands to take an angel in,
strands to climb the air :

Finer than the delicate
web the spider spins
To spread upon the tall bents
and the spiky whins,

But a stubborn filament,
spun of honest gut,
Proof against the fluttering
of ' cannot-be ' and ' but.'

I fashion filtres out of it
that will catch the few
Particles of silence
and the dust of dew :

Till the skein of gossamer
I stretch upon the grass
Is pollened every morning
by little things that pass ;

Hill-tops

Whisperers I cannot hear,
ghosts I cannot see,
Brush through the meshes
and leave featherings for me.

On my thread invisible
that yet will not break,
A frost-fine filigree
will fairy hands make :

On it, into rainbow-drops,
the dewy dust fill :
On it, into syllables,
the silence thrill.

Come a very still night
of clear October weather,
I will ladder up the sky
and thread the worlds together,

And drop back to earth, all
my gossamers athrong
With faraway choruses
and star-bursts of song.

Then, body of a spider
and spirit of a lark,
Darkling, I will hide
in a corner of the dark,

Rydal Water

I I

Till the dawn-wind shake me down
out of that mirth
A ripe star of merriment
to seed in the earth. . . .

Spiders spin from bent to bent
nets to catch the dew,
Spread the down with laundering
every morn anew :

Elfin handkerchiefs that are
only white with tears :
The sun shines : the dew dries :
the linen disappears.

Though we watch our gossamers,
never sleeping by them,
We neither see the eyes that weep
nor the hands that dry them.

2. Rydal Water

I

THERE was someone sailing o'er
Rydal Water : put ashore
At the little-pebbled strand
Where the water-crowfoots stand
Knee-deep in the surf to hand
Little passengers ashore.
There was someone sailing o'er
Rydal Water.

Hill-tops

Tell me, crowfoot, for you caught her
Where the ripple broke that brought her,—
You that in the ripples stand
Knee-deep, valorous, to hand
Little passengers ashore—
Who was it came sailing o'er
Rydal Water ?

‘ Hist ! ’ he said, and ‘ ask not me,
Though I ventured out and caught her.
She is one goes fairy-free :
None shall stay her at the strand :
Mortal yet might never thwart her,
Never keep her hand
When she came to land.
Ask the sedges, ask not me.’

Then I asked those warders
Of the little lake’s green borders :
And they whispered, ‘ she
Is the high hills’ daughter,
And a maid goes fairy-free.

Never lad of all that sought her
Any word of love hath taught her.
She hath her own wild lore
From the hills,’ they whispered : ‘ we
Glean its whispers passing o’er
Rydal Water.’

Crowfoot, save your valour ! O'er
 Rydal Water (as a floor
 Paved with Roman tesserae)
 Now she comes, trippingly.
 But who ?—ah, who is she ?
 . . . Nay, I cannot see.
 Wayward as a gleam is she.

Now she rides a water-lily
 Leaf that slips its anchor. Now
 The lake grows dark and chilly,
 And—God knows how—
 It is wider than before.
 I shiver, willy-nilly :
 It is a ghost, I trow,
 Water crowfoot hands ashore.
 'Tis a stranger comes to shore. . . .

Water-crowfoot, if need were
 For a childish passenger,
 Would you a little deeper stand,
 A little farther from the land,
 Thigh-deep in the cold water ?
 The boatman that hither brought her
 May of the shore have nothing taught her—
 Nothing said of the strange shore
 To the waif comes sailing o'er
 Rydal Water !

3. The Lake

SOME feet can walk the naked lake, while some
Need water-lily leaves to tread upon.
One kind of flesh upon the surface floats,
Another paddles over it in boats,
And there is yet another kind of flesh
Threads like a needle through its silky mesh.

I fancy death is like a lake, and I
Who boat upon it, when I come to die
Will to its waters take and not leap out
Of that cool bliss, fly-catching like a trout !
Howso you trail your line, you'll never boast
You hooked my credulously-greedy ghost.

Would I come to the surface or the shore
With all that depth of water to explore ?
And if I came—you'd only understand
As now you do the ripples on the strand—
As empty words you'd find no meaning for
So long as you remained dry-shod on land.

4. Marsh Marigolds

THE sun is lord of seeing, for his beams
Wall it about and circumstance our sight.
He sets a blazing blade before the gate
Of Otherworld, denying
Its passage to the dazzled gaze of men.

I know a way,—I shut mine eyes against
His splendour and go in.
Beyond the universe of the sun, I find
The life he hides within his beamy fence,
And therewithin, Love, that is earth-born, through
The veiling splendour stealing dewily.

There stand the dead, as it were marigolds
In the water-courses of the Elysian mead
Flaunting their yellow glory. Yet not all
Sturdily glorify the undazzled light ;
But here and there, a root is fed upon
Some sickness, wronged with tears, and watered with
A terrene bitterness of love unglad
In this faraway gladness, that it droops,
Eclipsing so its face.

—Ah, lover bereft,
Must you, with still-complaining and old regret
Of your own impotence, poison that joy ?
Your love, become a shame to that you love,
Curb its head down to you, stoop it down, that should
Feeding upon your courage, exultant stand
Erect, frank-browed and golden, to the light ?

5. The Daffodil

THERE'S something—God knows what—in Jack
or Jill
Will bear transplanting into heavenly soil
Out of our heavy earth and its stark toil,
To thrive there, be more Jill or Jack there, still.
You can shake off the dry clay and not kill :
'Tis such a crispy bulb as holds that roy'l
Challenge of gold against a sea-grey foil,
The April sun-and-showery daffodil.
—Something, thank God ! past our analysis.
An underground invisibility
Into whose sheath we can at need draw back.
The mower of the meadow leaves us this—
A trifle Death can carry oversea ;
Plant, quicken there—the quintessential Jack.

6. The Bridge

I CLIMBED the wide-world, twig and bent,
To halt before the void,
But there the spider's last reserves
Of cunning I deployed :

I drifted out my gossamers
Upon the evening gale :
They caught a little on its wings
And tugged as tugs a sail.

Then, holding to my gossamers,
 I lifted up and swept
 Across the airy interval
 I never could have stept.

Wingless, I traversed the abyss
 Ballooning on the wind,
 But trailed a thread of gossamer
 My enterprise behind ;

Beyond the void I fastened it,
 Till now the moth and midge
 Go less secure upon their wings
 Than I upon my bridge.

7. The God-child

WERE you by half less busy with your eyes
 To peer about and chatter, starling-wise,
 At every fancy, I'd engage, she said—
 'Twas Nature said—you should have goodlier yield
 Of all this visionary upland field,
 This airy pasturage of dreams ! It were
 A better use, she said, for mortal eyes
 To feed the soul with that which I distil
 From every tree and stone, that cannot be
 Save by the sight partook, than to go gad
 For fancies, though you gather baskets full.

I that have fed the ever-living gods,
 She said—'twas Nature said—have store enow
 To nourish the immortal child of Man
 Who with his eyes learns worship, with his eyes
 —Peering about no more, nor chattering—
 Browses upon my fells and grows into
 The form of aspiration, and becomes
 The wonder that I till the mountains for,
 And bid the brooks into the valleys bear.
 But if he learn not worship, if his eyes
 Peer only, he will wizen up until
 He rattles to and fro in the body's bulk.—
 Regard, she said how peaked the little saint
 Doth grow, for all you find of strange and quaint.

8. The Roundabout

(After Dehmel)

IN heaven there spins by day and night
 A mighty roundabout.
 As in a dream, we catch the sight,
 When flashing by us, all of light,
 It wheels its whirling rout:—
 Hist ! little scamp, look out !

Look out, I say : for mighty things
 Hang from its lusty beam.
 Without a stop, the stars it swings :
 Swings, and therewith a music rings
 So fine we do but seem
 To listen in a dream.

Dreaming, we hear the sound afar
 Somewhere, the world without.
 And that's why you so happy are,
 You scamp, who spin upon a star
 In not too fast a rout
 With this great roundabout !

9. Early Morning

(Suggested by a poem of Lebrecht Dreves)

EVER so early, at first crow of cock,
 Ere the cry of the quail in the corn,
 While the air of the morning is still, ere the rock
 Awakes to the echoing horn,—
 Like nobody else, and how nobody knows,
 Then, through the forest a Holy One goes.

O, I am sure, for the gossamered grass
 Is so quiet, so quiet the flowers !
 Still as they stood for the Presence to pass,
 The hawthorns are bended in bowers :
 And when the jays to the silence consent,
 Through the woods it is certain a Holy One went.

Maybe, Old Father Christmas was looking for holly,
 Or Jesus, Good Shepherd, for some
 Little lost lamb to retrieve from its folly,
 Comfort, and carry it home.
 Nobody saw him, so wrapt in his hood
 Was the Holy of Holies that wandered our Wood.

10. The Return of May

A QUIET little sleepy breeze
Moves in the hawthorn trees.
It is early, early :
But already the moonlight
Pales ; it will be soon light,
Opal, pearly.
A sleepy breeze
Is stirring the trees.

How, with lovely breath and cool,
It stirs the stillness, like a pool
Under a floating swan !
As a lake of water-lilies,
So deep and dark and still is
The air I float upon !
A little breeze
Ripples at my knees.

Dreary dark shadows lay
Over me yesterday :
But to-day is glad.
Who would look behind her,
To let the shadows blind her ?
Who would let the sad
Eyes of darkness make
Her doubt she is awake ?

The Return of May

21

To the old hawthorn trees,
Guided by a little breeze,
I have come to tell
The secret of the summer
To every other comer,
For I know it well :
But let them wake
Early for my sake.

I have hardly heart to say
To this world of dreamers—' May
Is to her kingdom come !
Wake now, all you lazies,
Violets, daisies !
Pipe, little dumb
Birds, for my sake :
Pipe them all awake ! '

Call, grey cuckoo, first, and then
Skylark, throstle, willow-wren,
All my choristers !
Call the children to their maying :
Children, there's no time for staying :
Dawn is in the firs :
The sleepy breeze
Wakens up the trees !

11. Wild Roses

HOVERING
light-petalled
over the fell,
as though
pair upon pair,
a summer's flight
of butterflies
had settled
there,
crimson and white.
But no !
Never yet might
butterflies wear
the wild-rose red ;
or, coupled, make
cup of so perfect rim.—
They break,
at any whim
of their desire,
asunder their delight,
that was not ever dewily
scented and dowered
with the diaphaneity
of colour, flowered
'twixt spike and thorny spike
upon this brier.—
A little like,
a little lovelier

than any those instant-pausing, sun-
enchanted things
of meadow-wandering wings ;
rooted, but hovering
above the fell,
their joy discovering,
unconscious what they tell,
or how,
leaning across the bright air now,
their pollen strewing open-handedly,
upon you they confer
midsummer
candidly.

12. Sky-twitter

TWEE, twee, twitter, twitter, twit !
Dipped into the dawn, I sing
Secrets of the infinite :
God is in my twittering.—

Once, when I was at the height
And the tether of my flight,
Having climbed the dark to where
There was morning in the air,
Suddenly I slipped my tether,
Arrowy from beak to feather,
Eager-tipped, into the clear
Of the beamy atmosphere,
Light as sunlight, I was shot
By a bow-string of desire,
For the earth withheld me not :

Higher, higher yet, and higher,
Up, up, ever up,
Till I reached the dizzy top
Of the wide-awakened sky.

There no farther could I fly :
Air was not beneath my wing,
Nothing but the rocketting
Of that impulse on whose spray
I was carried thereaway.
Then no longer up I flew :
Out of body, out of breath,
I was on a sudden through
On the other side of death.
I had crossed creation's sill :
Something mightier than my will
Had caught me up beyond my wit
Into wonder's infinite.

Floating there, I know not where,
Out beyond the curtained air,
Soaring, sinking, yet not quite
Drowned in that abyss of height
And billowy brightness,—blinded, spent,
Small, bewildered—then I heard
'Mid the vasty firmament,
Something, as it were a bird,
Sing the billowy beams among,
And he had the skylark's tongue,
And it simpler seemed to me
Than my own simplicity.

I had topped the skyey slope :
I lay panting in the cope
Where the bleating of the fells,
Bark of shepherd-dog, and yells
Of the eagle, raven-croak,
Clamour of awaking folk,
Whistle of the gale upon
The crag-edges, and the run
Of wild water over ridges,
Down into the silence sink
At the bottom of that brink.

Always there, the world above,
All the singing is of love.
It may be that up so high
Where no cloud can keep the sky,
Merely what is song and wing
Only love, can soar and sing.
—And then, love, with his always-giving
Grows so feather-light of living
That on any gust he might
Be swept to a prodigious height,
Perch upon the topmost twig
Of the sun's white beamy tree,
With a little heart grown big
In the light's felicity.

In the light I did not drown,
But I caught a rhyme was ringing
When, into my body, singing
Gasping, I came dropping down.

Twee, twee, twitter, twitter, twit !
Ecstasy of dawn I sing :
Sunlight and the stars in it,
And it is but twittering.

13. Sister Rain

DEAR, kind, good sister Rain,
Your hair, unwimpled, blows about my face,
Tickling my eyes to weep, weeping to beg this grace
Of you, sister,—a little one !
—Leave me alone awhile with brother Sun :
He and I and the earth and plenty of space !

14. Cloud Summons

WITHIN the shining curtains of the air
And like the vapours of cloud lost in the light,
Forms of desire, invisible presences,
Dwell, as at noon the stars of midsummer.
—The solid mountains thrust into the height,
The sky draws down with its realities.

Draw down, grey-feather-pinioned, downy-breasted
Cloud angels, and embosom this crag-crested
Stark-naked world, till it be clad again
In dews of your embracing,—bloom and grain
Of your enfolding shadowy caress.
Plenish the beck that loiter and are less
Eager when you withdraw your presences.

I am exhausted of the sun : athirst
 To feel your fingers on my aching lids,
 Ere with too much of seeing I have burst
 These eye-balls. O draw down !
 Visit again these arid watersheds
 That in the sun-blaze parch and brown !
 And me, bewildered on them in that blaze,
 O bury, bury, bury awhile !
 Enfold, embrace, embosom me ! Beguile
 My heart away from the insistent gaze
 Of this inevitable sun !
 Let me a little sleep from thought's incessancy
 Of choosing : for awhile,
 O blessed spirits, choosing ye,
 With choice have done !

15. Healing Magic

ALONG the nerves, effortlessly,
 A magic flows, from hand to hand
 Of you and me :
 It is not our contriving ; you
 Have not the power your friendship serves :
 I understand it not a whit :
 But my heart knows how, through and through
 Body and blood, an infinite
 Answering flood pulses, replying
 To all the vext
 Need, my perplext
 Brain was denying . . .

If woodbine may
To a loveliness invisible,
To a faraway otherworld wonder,
Its perfume give : with petals dress
That beautiful strange joy, till under
Your startled gaze, the fugitive
Miracle stays :
If the low light, shining on high
Translucent in the October beech
That flames its bright leaves in the blue
Smouldering sky, give silence speech :
If even a verse,
—Mere printer's ink on paper—fill
With all the reach of heaven, its terse
Thimbleful, till the tiny sup
Brim up its cup,
Swim out of measure, while you drink :
If, the spell broken that held him out,
The loud acclaimed, the myriad-spoken
Falsehood defamed, denied the doubt—
It is a god that we release :—
If effortless, rare exquisite
As ever a flower,—after the toil
Whose stubborn stress and struggle dour
Into the soil made way for it,
Arises peace :—
If, not unstriven for, not unsought,
But from beyond
The effort of our labouring thought,
Live waters pour
Along this channel to our pond,
—Sheer overplus and bounty given

From some hill-store of life to us—
If healing take the road we make :
Can friendship set open some door
In us, God yet may enter at,—
Is it for that Friendship is good ?
It is for that.

16. Sleep Descends

(After Goethe)

O VER all the hill-tops
is peace.
The boughs and still tops
almost cease
stirring apart.
The birds of the forest are sleeping
Quiet comes creeping
over thy heart.

Part II

I. Nightmare Hollow

I

THERE'S a white night thing, every creature flees—
To hear it whinny in the dark of the trees :
To catch it at the window-pane : to start as its hoofs
Paw the still tiles, or pitter-pat-pat on the roofs.
For it has eyes that hypnotise whatever thing it sees.

Its stable is among the trees in a place I know :
Spider-webbed with solitude.—Stink-horns grow
On the bank above its dank hollow. Stealthy mould
Creeps upon the derelict its four walls hold.
It glimmers in the dark with a phosphorescent glow.

In a place that I should know, for I was there last night,
Nightmare stables in a chamber built for delight—
Now forlornly ruinous : kept by old trees,
That thrust in boughs at window, and bow with their
knees,
Rocking in the gale, its walls that do not tumble—quite.

There is lodged so fell a wight as may well house
With the nightmare : with the nightmare in the dark
carouse.
In the mad dark he dwells forgot, its prisoner : and
still
There's a light at the window-gaps you see from the hill :
A glimmer through the emptiness among the ash-boughs.

For a soul under those brows lurks defeated. There
within

Lingers in the chamber, with the nightmare for his twin
Tenant.—'Tis the terror comes to greet you at the sill
Of the hall in the hollow. You feel its presence fill
Every corner of the house that it is stabled in.

No answer shall your summons win from the other
there.

You will only hear the whinny : you will only meet the
glare.

But if you should hold your ground, and your fellowship
Wrap you round and compass you against the terror's
grip,

You might enter trespassing into that grisly lair.

You might see him lying there.—Was one came in.
She drew

Closer, if within the horror, she might search out the
clue

To her coming. She was like a candle in that place.

Amid the dark, the creature sat up blinking in her face.

She looked on him, but her he neither saw nor seeing,
knew.—

2

' O, it's nightmare for a steed to ride ! It's madness
for a mount !

The earth reels, the air screams : I take no more account
Of steeds or cities when I stride the wild thing's back

Than of the silly grass I trample on my headlong track !

Cataract, cataract of delight—and I the torrent's
fount !

It bursts from my delirious brain, it flashes from my eyes :

It blasts the trees, it blackens them : their secret I surprise :

We search the sacred forests with our sudden hooves of fire :

They worship me as tyrant, they fulfil me my desire.

I catch the panic by the hair that from my coming flies.

Who would not be a maniac, to ride the nightmare so ?
To drive his spurs into her flank, and fast and shouting
go

Crashing, like a tornado, through the world's security ?
Who would not ride a-havoc through the frightened
dark with me ?

Ride, and snap his fingers in the face of God, his foe ?

For God is but a fool ! When I drink the stirrup-cup,
Wrap my pride about me and to saddle leap up,
God is only love, and shall ever love unhorse
Me that ride the nightmare upon a comet course ?—
Pity was not mixed into the potion that I sup.

Give God the sun for candle, and the carol of a lark !
I am God's extinguisher—brazen-throated, stark.
And there's music goes with me : folk fall a-praying
Once they catch the flicker of our faraway neighing.
What is true by daylight is not truth at dark . . .

3

‘What is this comes trespassing upon my solitude ?
Is it God come here to settle for our old-time feud ?—
Dare you then, pale Ghost, within our threshold stand,
As though perchance the nightmare will come feed out
of your hand ?
Or will kneel to lick your feet that we have blood-im-
brued ?

—It is a beggar-woman, come to whine a crust of
bread.—
Come, trollop, and we’ll queen you here ! Come up into
our bed !
We’ll play Cophetua with you : mate you, and bid you
breed :
Throne you, woman : pillion you, upon our peerless
steed !—
Silent she stands, as though she had been deaf to what
I said.

Shadowy there, a ghostly dead woman without a face,
Silent standing, in this light-perplexed and altered place.
Her eyes I cannot see, but they strive within the gloom
Of the chamber I am in, till its dark becomes a womb
And I am being formed to irretrievable disgrace.

Where about me is a trace of my demon-power ?
Nightmare has deserted me.—I can but quake and cower
Naked in her strange gaze, that searches with cold flame
This that was my poppy-glory, this that is my shame.
She has shaken off the flaunting petals from its flower . . .

4

' I could no more remember any glory I had had,
Nor my story.—I was nothing but a soul unclad :
A man that is an infant—if, upon her breast, I might
Cover my eyes from seeing, and my body from my sight.
But her I could not see, could not touch.—I was mad.

Shadows fled from me.—A shaft of bright moonshine, shot
Through some cranny at a venture, struck me.—I forgot
I was naked in it.—For a moment, in the grass—
A quiet light upon my eyes . . . How did it come to pass
I am within my pomp again and the light is not ? '

5

He strives with dream.—She had drawn nigh, invisible
to him :
Had seen his gaze awake to her. Sane of heart and limb,
Flashing recognition, he had risen, human-eyed.
They were out of Nightmare Hollow on the open hill-
side.
(The moon had risen clear across the mountain's iron
rim.)

But behind them, crept a grim darkness down upon
That empty place. Into it he was gulfed again and
gone.
Had the nightmare tracked their slot across the moonlit
field ?
It whinnied after. And again that new creation reeled
Back into chaos. In a moment, all her deed undone.—

6

' My sight for yet a little while the terror has not sealed,
Though it needed but to follow me for my revolt to
yield.

I, that was for the instant free, am but the king again ;
But prisoned in this hollow, in the four walls of my
brain,

I still can see the quiet light upon the moonlit field.

Wounded am I, not healed. For ever in these dungeon
walls

Sight and seeming struggle for me. Often now appals
My waking-dream, some shadowy gleam of moonlight
shotten in

Through a forgotten chink, to show me, hideously a-
grin,

This body of my impotence that with the nightmare
stalls.

Echo of her haunts and calls me. But I cannot make
Answer. Through the web of magic-silence cannot
break.

Cannot reach her through this fear that all-possesses me.
But if she herself were here, it could no longer be
Aught but mere dreaming. To her I should awake.
Clear, out of this seeming, to her I would awake.'

2. The Word of Power

THERE'S something ambushed in the night
Unfriendly, that besets my heart with fright :
And yet, could I but say
One word aright,
Safely meseems I might
Put fear away ;
Blow out the watching light ;
Give myself up to sleep, or sleepless, quite
Quietly await the day.

A bodiless boding fills the air,
Stirs in the curtain, climbs the creaking stair :
Yet, could I say a word
Would scarcely scare
Any grey unaware
Night-searching bird,
There's not a fear would dare
Lurk in a corner of the chamber where
Only whispering, it had stirred.

Whispering, its one magic note
Would stir the deep of space, near and remote,
To answer like a bell,
A bell whose throat
Peals forth that syllable
With billowy swell
And bourdon. Earth, afloat
Upon that tide of sound, rides like a boat,
Trembling, small, invisible.

Silent, I lay all night awake
Stark night upon stark night.—To-night I break
The silence. In its swound
I no more quake
Moveless, but child-like make
That secret sound
Begin to murmur :—take
Heart, hearing it, profound
Beneath the tick of time and underground
Of things established.—Even now it spake
Answering, from beyond earth's bound.

3. The Looking-glass

COMES another day
But what a face to greet it !
Take the looking-glass away :
That won't meet it.
Now for a new face,
Pray, good Nature !
A new face, a new face,
Not any feature—
Eyes and nose and mouth will do,
Forehead, cheek and chin,
What I want early
Is a new look therein.

Old towse-locks,
The damson at my door,
Needs none. To-day he's
As merry as before.

Doddering he may be,
But robin in the spray
Twirling his song in the twirling twigs
Is not more gay.

When the god comes riding
Over the Weald
From Tonbridge to Crowborough
Field after field,
Solitary in the boughs,
One scarlet berry,
Robin twitters, and the bare
Damson's just as merry
Every new morning
All through February.

Take the glass !—To-day,
To-day, I want Nature,
A new face, pray :
For this old is grey :
A face like a street
With doors and windows sealed :
No face to greet
The sun across the Weald :
Glances curtained,
Smiles heavy-shod,
Incapable of welcoming
A god,
As any old tree or bird,
Robin, ay, or rook,
Meets any morning
With a new look.

4. The New Moon

I

ARMIES of gnomish fellows digging coal,
And casting wheels, and whirling them with steam :
Faster, faster the wheels :
England humming with wheels.
Over the sea with words the air is drumming :
In Europe and America and the East
Grey-faced cities are eagerly
Shouting across oceans to one another
Of great affairs.

A boy walks over the hills from Westerham.
Bright, silent, up in the deep sky, Venus
In the west, aloof from all the rattle,
The dog-star in the south, great Jupiter
Wheeling his moons in the east ; but in the north
The glare of the great city, the lights of London,
Twenty miles away
Over the North Downs.

In a clump of pines, overlooking the Weald,
He comes to a stand at sight of the wispy new
Moon, Venus outshines :
Turns over his pocket-penny,
And shapes a wish will carry him away
Farther and faster than an aeroplane,
To neither planet nor star,
But back of them into that dark luminousness

Out of which, as out of a dark hill,
Springs their light. He is making for himself
Live wheels, live wings. He is boring in and in
To the oil-springs of imagination, for
Power that shall be in his nostrils a fiery
Distance-compelling spirit of winged victory.
Venus stands above Godstone, Sirius
Is over Edenbridge, and Jupiter
Beyond Toy's Hill. Among the pines, a boy
Is shaping a wish under the wispy moon.

Like a falling petal,
Like a bright shaving of silver,
He sees the moon go drifting down the sky.
He hears in the yew-boughs, yonder on the slope,
An owl hooting. The moon is drifting. Hark !
Over the hills, like the current Earth makes whirling,
Wheeling her way through Time, blows the west wind
Brightening again the sky. He sees the moon
Not drifting at all, but with keen prow cutting
The waves of the west wind,
Sailing into the west.

Like a river, he hears the wind
Rushing among the branches,
Sparkling the stars that dance in them : and he thinks :
' I wish I had a long
Pole of imagination
To plant on that bright moon,
So that I could leap over
This river of wind, and light
Beyond the wash of its waves, beyond the wash
The earth makes, wheeling its way forever through Time.

' Or, if I cannot have
Such a pole of imagination,
Then I wish I were a salmon, a salmon to leap
Against the headlong stream ;
To leap from pool to pool
Upstream, until I come to the top of it :
For there I should find a man is making himself
Over, among the mountains and the stars
At the head of this swift river
That runs down to the sea ;
And I would watch how he makes
Himself over again.'

In the pine grove upon Mariners' Hill,
The boy was choosing a wish : he was boring deep,
Seeking the power would drive him across and against
The wash of the earth, into the quiet place
Where a man is making himself over again . . .

(There comes an end to wheels :
An end to cities and news :
An end to things and to thoughts about things :
But to a man I have only found the first clue
And beginning. It does not seem to go
With the drift and wash of the world.)

2

' To-hoo ! ' cries the owl
In the boughs of the yew.
And above the lad's head in a thick pine,
Answers ' to-hoo ! ' and ' to-hoo ! '

He looks up in the boughs
 Where the wheel-eyed, foolish owl to-hoos and to-hoos
 Among its feathers, and he stops wish-making.
 Two things perplex him : now he sees the brave
 Little young moon is piled with a great load—
 The old unlighted moon she is taking away.
 And something, as he looks into the pine-tops,
 Seems outstretched across the windy sky :
 From Venus overstretched to Jupiter
 Like a great net, like a great cobweb stretched
 Over the whole world,
 Caging him in, under :
 Refusing escape beyond,
 To whatever would spring up and away.
 How can the wish the boy was making escape ?

Wings had his wish, and a song it should sing, flying.
 Like a small bird with a crest on its head and fine
 Twig-clasping feet. That was the form of the wish
 He has been making under the new moon :
 Not at all a match for the owlish thing
 Ready to pounce out of its cobwebs on it.
 He has been making a thing, big as his hand,
 Small as a word. He has been packing it tight,
 Putting himself into that arrowy wish :
 Now he puts it back in his heart and thinks.

He thinks how, long ago
 Beyond the river of Time,
 God set a lad on the earth and gave him a wish
 To make under each new moon. But fancy came

Bringing him forms he could readily fashion,—wars
 Pyramids, empires, cities on hill-tops, wheels—
 All of the numberless things there are in books.
 The lad began wishing them, wishing them under the
 moon

And under the moon, for a thousand years :
 God looking on the while,
 The lad not looking at God.—

With that, his eye catches the vanishing new
 Moon as she drives over the piny ridge
 Of Crockham Hill to set. Heavy she is
 Carrying the old moon in her slim boat
 Against the March wind.—Suddenly, out
 Like a cock against the morrow,
 Crows the wish of the boy !

(I was out on the hills where the boy was.
 I heard him shout. I saw him going home
 Over the dark heathery-shouldered hill :
 Orion with his dogs striding the sky.)

5. Upon the Wind

(Four-stress-lines)

A VOICE :

BEWARE, Guenever ! Come no nigher !
 I have fairy in the blood from my mother's side.

Troth is not in us that are of Morgan's kin :
 They are not themselves that come of those people.

There is a spell on us from of eld and eld :
We are at hide-and-seek in our own bodies.

To-day, we are what we seem—trusty men :
But to-morrow, who knows what is in it ?

I am here now, and now I am away :
'Twixt me and my seeming may none distinguish,

Save she herself is of the fairies,
With the othersight of underwater.

You will not catch gleam of the sea-wolf's teeth,
You will only see the appearance of me, Lancelot.

It will not be my lips, it will not be my body,
You will have with you then in a lonely place.

Wherever I am, it will not be with you.
Whoever is with you, it will not be Lancelot.

Away, Guenever ! Away now !
How should you tell is it I or another ?

I swear there is this curse on me and the likes of me
Who have fairy in the blood from the mother's side.

ANOTHER VOICE :

There is no need for words of yours,
Unless they should be the words of a man.

Yours are not words for any woman
To have spoken before her in this place.

Indeed, I will not stay ! But I will leave
A word, that for you will be company enough.

I, Guenever, Britain's Queen
Fear not Morgan's kin.

What you are, if I choose it,
The blood of your mother could not alter.

I have but to look on your appearance
And who is Morgan to keep you out of it ?

There is virtue enough in a proud woman :
She is not deceived against her will.

If I had a mind to you, Lancelot,
Do you suppose that God would hinder ?

Take that from me, going from you,
To go with you forever and ever.

FIRST VOICE :

O proud woman, there is yet a word
I will send with you going away.

There is greater peril you to be proud
Than any other peril that is in the world.

For me, indeed, there is danger enough :
But at least it is not I that walk blindfold.

It is not I that will not be warned.
They lie in ambush for the proud that see not.

Do you suppose, because you are a queen,
That jealousy does not lurk in the trees ?

If you had taken me with you, Guenever,
You would have been less lonely a woman :

Arthur and you would have stood less lonely
In the days that are coming thick upon you.

SECOND VOICE :

Must you pile yet more folly on folly ?
I will not take your wood word with me.

Jealousy ! as if it were not your gift !
As if, without you, I had an enemy !

If I had had a mind to avoid peril
I would be sitting now beside Arthur.

If I had ever a thought of Lancelot
It was not of his sword that I was thinking.

I may be too proud for a king's queen :
Maybe, I had rather play at cards with Morgan—

For, it might be a man, or the appearance of a man
Who had fairy in his blood from his mother's side.

FIRST VOICE :

It may be because I am myself your peril
I am nearer you to-night than to my sword.

THE WIND :

Away, Guenever ! Away, Lancelot !—
Wherever they go hence it will be together.

6. Enigma

IF you would but tell me what the shadow is that
beckons,
Beckons from the borders of your being :
What is it that answers in me, reaching ever to you :—
Something, but it hides beyond my seeing.
Phantom is it only, that besets me in your presence,
Or is it a god, and ours for freeing ?

Would you but vouchsafe to be my comrade, you could
tell me :

Take in yours my hand, that I'd be near you :
Clear, upon your lips or in your touch, it would discover
This, that your concealing makes me fear you.
Darkened and perplexed, you have enwrapped us in
enigma :
Solve it for me ! Bid the shadows clear you !

You could make it plain to me with only such a little
Particle of truth, if you would say it.
Dream is it, or life is it that beckons from you to me ?
God is it ?—Your silence doth betray it,
Keeping it unworshipped of my soul, that can but wonder
If it is a ghost that we should lay it.

Hovering about you, still forever you refuse it
Certainty of body or of speech.
Never you'll admit it, that is ever at your shoulder,
Never let it come within my reach.
You and I, with never-understanding of each other
Liars are to every one and each.

7. The Stream Cradle

THIS little bundled thing grows heavy on me, as
Alone I tramp the summer roads. I ask you, What
Could any tramping man make of this woman's-ware ?
It was a part of her and she had sense of it,
But went and left it me to carry and tend. I'll lay
It deftly down upon this tiny-pebbled isle,—
Upon this watery lap, between these rocky knees,
Tall crowfoots wavering their planets over it,
Now bright, now suddenly in eclipse of the windy light.

Pale, on the bank, the cow-wheat quivers quietness ;
Hour upon hour, twin waterfalls shall croon to him
Wisdom, the grave grove of oracular oaks assenting.
Maiden Moor, shadowy, in the morning sun serene,
Watches above his sleep : over his cradle rim
Green frondy fingers, warm with sunshine cool with
shade,
Caressingly make passes across his puckered brow.—
He sleeps. The eternal motherly simplicity
Of the old sybilline ages, like Madonna, nurses
That littleness : at her deep bosom suckles him
With milky drops of wonder : sings into his slumber
Low ringing syllables that, watery-wavering
Upon the rhythm of life, I cannot set to rhyme.

And will he, as a dreamer, catch them in his sleep ?
Or, cradled in the lap of dream, dreamlessly take
His elfin nurture as he took his happy birth ?
—He slumbers, and within his sleep nestles to Her.

8. Kwanyin

WHILE their luggage is going aboard, it is to the
white Kwanyin
Seafarers commit them, to prosper in their voyage,
Or—and it may be better—to fall into her hands.

Brooding unseen of fishermen, in a cave under the cliff,
—Into it, out of it, flooding and ebbing, the murmuring
water—

White Kwanyin, the gentleness of the wild heart of the
sea,

Watches the wave that washes the rock at her folded
feet :

Broods above it, responds to each immemorial murmur :
Counts over the tale of the sea, as a shepherdess reckons
her flock.

To each of the syllabled sounds of the murmur, Kwan-
yin's spirit

Murmuring moves, in her dim undercliff sanctuary.

Into her quiet heart, all the adventure of sea-going,

The unearthly light of the wanton, untamable, glittering
element,

Kwanyin draws. The dragon sea, flowing up to her feet,
Worships. Back from her heart, back from her under-
cliff cave,

Floods again, as from the abysmal heart of the ocean,
Mastered, pulsed anew with Kwanyin's mystic brooding.

Part III

1. At Evening on the Beach

‘ HAVE ye not striven enough, that still ye strive—
Cannot let billows be and come ashore ?
Is it only for the strife ye are alive,
Never to have done with strife and strive no more ?

‘ Striving that lacks the end of strife is vain.
What harvest is there of that element
Unless it bring to port, until it gain
Issue at last of striving in content ?

‘ Are ye but foam-drift of the weltering surf
Vainly along these beaches to be strown ?
Is it not upon the ploughland and the turf
For blossom and harvest that ye should be sown ?

‘ Earth-born are ye, and to the soil belong.
Beaten into the battling surf ye drown.
The very birds would make of you a song
Though ye were only profitless thistle-down.

‘ Even of your sleep, if in my bosom ye lay,
And heaved no longer with the restless main,
Would a rich bounty spring ’twixt day and day,
To freight the tide with argosies of grain.

‘ For, must ye traffic still in the watery coil,
I’d cargo all your battling enterprise
With surplus of mine inexhaustible soil,
For carriage joy, and peace for merchandise.

' But ye, having striven the day long, drop asleep
Into a blank night, wherefrom if ye wake
'Tis but to striving. Will ye never reap
Your toil, nor wages of your labour take ? '

2. The Atomy Hosts

I

THE air is rife with vivid marshalry,
Infinitesimal, of life and death—
Impulsive atoms, of such subtlety
They play upon the brain, invade the breath,
At hide-and-seek throughout the visible frame
Of substance,—atomy minions that acclaim
The captaincy of some high lord of glory or of shame.

With these the ethereal tissue stirs and thrills,
Obedient to their rhythmic pulse ; and life
Is woven of that tissue : even our wills
Are fashioned out of their unceasing strife,
And our desire is woven of atomy strands
Into the warp of time by unseen hands :
Dreaming or waking still the unseen our will commands.

2

There is a power the atomy strife subdues
To his imperative purpose : there's a will
The currents of the air cannot confuse,
Amid the eddying ether constant still :—
Who would not be of such pure power compact
That by the battle of the world attacked,
Its paralysing play himself would counteract ?

Would he not gather, in the windy field
Of heaven, the hill-top blossom of delight :
And with the harvest that the moments yield,
Plenish his own intrepid spirit with might ?
Voices of comrades far away, he'd catch
In the night-spaces of his thought ; and match
Terror with calm that from the tempest's heart he'd snatch.

3

That high subduing power inviolable,
That winnows and elects the airy throng
Fantastic, to its all-determining will,
Is Freedom. It is master of the song
That in the fabric of the world vibrates,
And with the ardour of the spirit mates,
And with man's inmost being interpenetrates.

Till now the immortal promise in him stirs
The shadow of his flesh, informing it :
Thrills those brief atom-spangled gossamers
With bright signification infinite :
Joins and transfuses those blind cells with blood
Pulsating through them in a murmuring flood
Of purpose : bursts into a blossom every bud.

4

For, from some spring beneath his heart, some source
Deeper within him than his sense perceives,
Wells-up and overflows his being, a force
That his frustrate humanity achieves :
His spirit, married into life, is brim
With that which erstwhiles fashioned every limb
In order that with God it might impassion him.

The passion of the god he takes. He is
In that creative current, polarised—
A magnet, in whose field the atomies
To a new patterned meaning are devised.
His winged imagination finds the key
To life's undreamed potentiality :
He touches Earth : her love, his quickening touch sets
free.

5

But tumult follows after him that flies :
And finds, and in its battle will involve
The truant spirit : till among its cries
Confused, there yet shall entering, resolve
Its din into a starry concord, one
Clear note in that discordant million :—
Without man's freedom lies creation all undone.

Man holds the meaning supernatural
That hidden from the heart of the earth, abides
Waiting his evocation, when it shall
Lift suddenly the shadow that divides
Life from itself, to know how every whit
The parts of difference one another fit,
And piece together, in the single joy of it.

—Holds, and withholds : and still withholding, is
In every delicate fibre of his being,
A-storm with hosts of warring atomies
Marshalled by potencies beyond his seeing ;
Whom yet he blindly serves, or bends the knee
Before their spectral power, idolatrously,
Withholding in his will the whole world's liberty.

3. The Parting

SHE left me, and the chill air as she went
 Closed after her. Then after her I cried
 'Give me a moment yet !' She turned. Beside
 Her, silent, all my spirit was unpent ;
 For I beheld the life that I had meant
 And nothing yet of me had justified.

It was that moment before sunset when
 The air gives way, as it were suddenly.
 Hill upon hill, the world began to be
 To its utmost margin, visible again :
 But a new light-transfigured world, for then
 In that swift moment, I was such as she.

In mine own self, I knew the joy begin
 That in her advent I had looked upon :
 Knew the light shining out of me, that shone
 About me, on the juniper and whin,
 Lighted as with a glory from within
 The Grail that housed of eld at Avallon.

It was her touch that kindled : but 'twas I
 That kindled at it. Sprang the throbbing flame
 Of affirmation in me. I became
 Twin with her eagerness, and fain to try
 My own wings on the adventure of the sky :
 I had forgotten to be halt and maim.

I did not need her longer for a guide :
Needed her not before me to entice
My soul across the sills of paradise :
For I, too, upright-willed and eager-eyed,
Took the adventure, able to decide
Each strange step for myself, and pay the price :

Because within me, on the moment, grew
To certain knowledge, what my heart had guessed
Beholding her. For now my soul confessed
God immanent in me : each breath I drew
Inflamed that wondrous certainty anew,
Till I was of its fiery joy possessed.

Authority was mine, that I had wanted.
Instant within my will, the voice divine
Issued its fiat, and the word was mine.
I was no more a shade by shadows haunted.
Creative joy through all my being chanted
Changing its watery substance into wine.

She went. But I, in that new life, remain
A flickering beacon on the windy verge
Of deeps unplumbed. I hear the ocean-surge
Gossiping with the cliff : and in my brain,
Cries of æonian battle, and refrain
Of doubt and shame and sorrow like a dirge ;

But nested in my heart, the fire abides,
Fuelled with what I gather on the hills
Of wonder ; and the rainy tempest skills
Not to extinguish it. No shadow hides
Wholly the flame, nor any fear divides
My body from the freedom it fulfils.

4. On Maiden Moor

I

AFTER two thousand years,
Faith is a skylark still
Upon this moor our lady's bed-straw sheets
And thyme broiders with crimson, tormentil
With yellow stitches, and the parsley-fern
Knots with lambs'-pillows. Here, the skylark nests
I' the dead year's bracken : flinging up his flight
Hardly above the crag
Where now no eagle sits.
A little taller than an ash
His leafy head of singing floats,
And glitters in the sunshine all
Its twinkling notes.
What matter if,
Above our valley wits,
Our sheep and neat,
And level with our climbing, he
Can sing, and will,
Though but a skylark still
After two thousand years ?

2

Faith, still a skylark, sings on Maiden Moor
As blithely as before. What matters else ?
For faith this matters : that above the peaks,
On wings of his substantial thought, man seeks,
But sings in the amethystine element
No more, as ere he sprang
Above the crags, the faith within him sang.

3

O skylark !—Little flower
Bred of our lady's bed-straw, to grow up
Just to the earth-cup's brim,
And just to brim the cup
With the old flowery hymn
Of childish praise—
The courage in our heart hath eagle's wings,
To the sun it doth aspire :
The unfathomable element no more it fears :
Yet than your flight, it springs no higher,
When now, after two thousand years,
It sings !

4

Is it forbidden of Fate ?
Is it against some law of life's dominions ?
Will nature never mate
Together, and combine
That singing with those pinions ?
For the azure height,
The freedom in my heart seems fitter
Than this clipped flight,
This so-curt tether,
This happy tree-top twitter. . .
Are not those cloudy-shadowed mountains mine ?
Not mine that cloud-companioned white
Queen of the deep midsummer night ?
Not mine, the whole
To-thought-unfathomable mystery of space
That, for the enamoured soul,
Smiles like the face
Of one that she might trust—
Yea, and she will, and must ! . . .

5

Then it was not a skylark that I heard
 On the high tops, up-brimming all the sky,
 Dilating with sublime
 Daring the vast of air, as never a bird,
 Howso up-spiralling into the height he try :
 But, struggle surmounting, feathered with ancient fears,
 Taking, as naught to stumble at,
 The little gulf of Time
 With its two thousand years,—
 Rose Man's Magnificat
 On Gabriel wings ! . . .
 Faith, no mere skylark, sings.

5. Renascence

OF what Earth, when she bare
 Adam, her man-child, dreamed,
 and dreaming broke into her Eden-song,
 Her child is also now aware :
 And to-day the silent throng

Of seeming alien powers,
 Is all his fellowship, that has
 awaited him with outstretched hands
 Through the innumerable hours :
 He beholds and understands :

Joy in his heart awakes :
 His hands are full of joy :
 he reaches out and finds companions
 In gladness : their discovery makes
 Light about him, like the sun's,

Whose rising startles not
The woods to such a panic peal
 of shadow-chasing merriment
As this, wherein has Earth forgot
All but her supreme event.

6. Under Glaramara

I

CLEAR Derwent under Glaramara runs
Rainily. Showery ash-trees border it
Below great crags, broad-browed, and the arm-swept rim
Of Greenup. There aloft, a raven croaks
Along the marching caravan of clouds
That ever eastward journey, a multitude
Covering almost the sky's blue steppe with their
Huge transport. Here beneath, by Derwent's flow,
Is none of all this sisterhood of ash-trees
But, of the ancient mystery initiate,
Serves, priestess of the river-rite, wherein
The footsteps of the mountain-walking gleam
Partake.—The brakes, the boulders and the tall
Overhead shafts make a fit garnishing
For this large worship of the open world,
Wherein the running water, better than
Murmurless wine, is poured for sacrament.

2

Comely is all the body as earth is comely,
That April visits with wonder, May with promise,
Midsummer brims with delight, and autumn loads
With sheaves and glory of fallen leaves, and winter

Bares anew to the sky with no shame in it. . .
So is the body wrought that it conceives
Of wonder, when the spirit, having been
Led forth of love out of the open door
Apparelled in his own mysterious form,
Presently as a householder returns
To his tenement with what he gathered thence.

When to the flesh returning with his wonder,
The spirit carries home that heavenly foison,
He fills the bosom with flowery odours, as
The little thymy breasts of an upland pasture
Fill full of honey that the bee sucks bumbling :
Or as the rainy summer gale with perfume
Sun-distilled, aromatic, he freights the windy
Sunlighted shower that falls upon the shoulders :
Plants in the strong flanks such primitive passion
Of elemental splendours as, beside
The amber-swimming water among the rocks,
Populates all a valley with tall lissom
Sacred ashes, that stand along the river,
Sun-transfused, windy-branching. The body is all
Kind earth for the spirit to sow with wonder.

7. Mantineian Lore

HOVERS a joy invisible on the bright
Face that is but a shadow of that delight :
The pure, bewildering power
Of beauty veils itself from sight
In the petals of the flower.

God hides himself behind a face, a flower :
But when a spirit, escaping from the hour,
Her infinite passion slakes
At God himself, drinking his power,
She is what she partakes.

O then, beyond the veils of body and sight,
She becomes consubstantial with delight !
Her joy is eucharist.
Upon that diet, the shadowless bright
Makers of joy subsist.

And she, embraced into that heavenly power,
Carries again into her own small hour,
And to the beautiful
Earth, hidden in her body's flower,
The beauty invisible.

8. Return

WHO—or what—is my strange body become ?
Till now, I was happy in it for a homely dress ;
Now it is cast aside of my happiness :
Now it answers for nothing : dark to me, dumb,
Yonder, uncomprehended of love, it lies,
Setting us two apart with its alien eyes.
Tell me : O what is my strange body become ?

To-night, I am in your eyes, I am in your breath.
I am in your body to-night, and mine a stranger.

To-night, my fear is in it, it lurks with danger.
In yours, my joy is apparelled, in mine is death.
Were yours not nearer than it, I would be afraid.
To-night it is empty of me ; for undismayed
I have come into your eyes, I am in your breath !

So empty and near—I dare not enter again.
But you are nearer !—Yea, but you are near.
Yea, but you will go with me and oust my fear !
I am with you in your body : bring me then—
For I will go with you, even—when you shall shine
Out of those eyes that behold us and are not mine—
Whither, alone, I cannot go back again.

9. To You

TO You—to You, rather than to my name—
The many things I am—the Me beyond
The stars, and this laborious me—respond.
You whisper, and I have forgot the shame
And pride that in my body set their game.
You cry, and thought's inexplicable bond
Looses.—I am no longer now the fond
Poor creature of my comfort, meek and tame :
But passionate to the compass of my soul
With that incomparable joy that I
Mutely foreboded, lest it should defy
My fear :—lest, snatching me from his control,
It set creation ringing, with the whole
Courage of incarnation in its cry.

10. Affirmation

THOU art no more heart-sick :
No more importunate, thou,
That Love be quick :
For here is He, and now :
And thou art blest,
Of Love himself possessed.

It was not yesterday,
Nor may to-morrow be.
No need to pray :
Here, here immortally,
And nowhere else,
The shining wonder dwells.

Thou art come face to face
With very Joy : thou hast
Entered his place.
Here, wonder is amassed.
Here's all the good
Hope ever dreamed—or could.

Life, absolute, divine,
Is at thy finger-tip.
Now is it thine.
Yet canst thou let it slip.
Joy is thy share—
Take, if thou will and dare.

11. Twice Spoken

A N afternoon in May,
The flaming sword made way
For me, and I went in to Paradise :
I heard the creatures speaking
The word that I was seeking :
Once in my heart I heard it, and now have heard it
twice :

Once, in my heart I heard
The indubitable word :—
' I am more instant to thee than thy fear ! '—
That, oh now, in and under
The beauty and the wonder,
Sings :—' Ah, thou art come hither, and home to Me,
my dear ! '

12. Thumb-nail Portrait

Y OU do not struggle, do not cry :
Contentment seems to fructify
In you :—to grow from more to more,
Nourished upon a secret store
Of joy assimilable, joy
That is your wages and employ.

13. An Old Sampler

LOVE'S blind, they say,
To whom the earth and sky's
Perpetual pageantries
Little convey :
Busy with merchandise,
Or purblind, they !
And I surmise
There's nothing may
Distract, cajole, affray
Love from his prize.
New trades he never tries ;
Bargains, nor buys
Of their outspread display :
But ever, and for aye,
Blind man, pursues his play
And enterprise.
Naught he replies—
Not even a ' yea ' or ' nay,'
To their insistent cries,
Their welcomes and good-byes :
Brooks not delay :
But, instant, to his clay
Sings, potter-wise :
And ever doth essay
Those mysteries
Whereof he hath the way.
He doth devise
For God, even to-day,
A new surprise.

On other quest he hies
Never : his England, flies
For no America !
If only he can stay
At home, and there obey
His simple-seeming fay
Purpose, that yet outvies
Those foreign destinies.

But see the land decay
That Love denies !
Thwarted, away
On sudden wings he'll rise
And leave you, grey
As old Cathay.

Love's blind, they say,
And boast their peeping eyes :
And they're astray
And Love's in Paradise !
Then who would not despise
Such redeless sight, and pray
For Love instead of eyes ?

14. Counsel of Love

' **A** MID the mystery you cannot understand
You shall not be afraid,' said Love, 'but keep
my hand.

You shall not be afraid, for it is through the dark
I must lead you, where you cannot understand.

Within the light, you deemed you could not miss your
mark.

Day is done. You are dismayed to find the dark
Thicken with uncertainty. Keep then my hand :
It is I,' said Love, 'will bring you to your mark.'

' But,' I said, ' it is not, Love, for my *own* head
That this dreadful thronging of the dark I dread.
It is because I love I am afraid to-night.
The grey wings are over the well-beloved head.'

' If you let go my hand,' said Love, ' your fear to fight,
Can you better guard her than I, through the night ?
If you keep my hand, against the foe you dread
Will you not be better-weaponed for the fight ?

' Can I not endue the hand that is in mine
With a virtue no imagination can divine ?
Can I not, beyond your understanding, fill
Your very hand with wisdom, when it lies in mine ? '

' Let me not let go your hand ! Keep it I will,
Howso fear with menace all the darkness fill.
While my love is part of yours, comrade divine,
Shall my will to save be mighty in your will.'

15. At Death's Door.

THE door is shut 'twixt you and me ;
Death locked it yesterday :
In his dark pocket put the key
And went with it away.
But love remains with you and me—
Love waxes day by day :
Though blank the door and lost the key,
Yet love will find a way.

That you are there and I am here,
Is not enough to say.
Wherever you are, you are dear,
And dearer day by day.
Body of you may disappear,
Dissolving into clay,
But you, in yonder hemisphere
Abide, and there's a way.

If traffic, in its caravan,
Can traverse Africa :
If merchandise in vessels can
Frank the tempestuous sea—
The intercourse we two began
Death cannot long delay :
Yet will I trust none other than
Love to find out a way.

16. At the Window

WHEN night falls, or by day
Perplexities appal
My courage, I consult
With life, and hear him say :—
' Love, that takes all, gives all,
Achieves all a man may,
Needs no strange difficult
Machinery, no occult
Magic. To great and small
Comes love as natural
As to a child its play.

' As easy is it to draw
Love in and breathe it out
As is it to draw breath.
As simple is its law
And plain to Colin Clout
As any country saw
That ran in Nazareth
When Jesus drew the breath
Of God that blows about
This cottage. But without
The love of God is death.

' He knew, he dwelt in it.
He gathered in his span
One friend, another, three :
A weed, a bird, a bit

Of blue sky. He began
Creating every whit
All his world new, to be
His for eternity ;
As you and every man
May, by no other than
His way of loving it.'

I look and see him stand
Without Time's window-pane
To beckon us, and bid
Reach out and take his hand
Friendly ; and know him fain
That we should understand
How still he harbours 'mid
All loving, only hid,
That our love may attain
His strength, and without strain
Accomplish what he did.

Part IV

1. The Story of Freda Vore

Preludes

I

IN and out of the arabesque
of words on the white sheet,
A meaning flits and glimmers its
mischievous elfin feet,

As in and out of the daily task
and traffic men contrive,
Go uninvited presences
to keep their souls alive.

The country of imagination
shines at the open door,
And we its airy landscape see
as we have eyes therefor.

So hear the tale I tell again
of one who went about
The world of things as a meaning goes
the pages in and out.

Listen as you might listen by
a campfire on a hill
To the babble of a tale that ran
as simple as a rill,
And yet it had a wisdom in it
that I ponder still.

2

Up the miles from Los Gatos climbs
the road for Santa Cruz.
I have turned in at the end of the day
as every camper does :

Through a gate, and among the trees,
I have drawn my waggon in,
Kindled a dead-wood fire, and brewed
coffee in an old tin.

My white mare browses in the clearing :
I sit on the ground and smoke,
Far away from the hurry and crowd
of jungling city-folk.

Grave, in the night, the ancient trees
keep silence and are still :
Fathomless silence—every one
being its syllable :

And the moon weaves in the silence
about and about me, spells ;
While an ancient solitary woman
to me of Freda tells.

Of how she dwelt for twenty years
a fosterling, among
These primitive great redwoods
babbles on the old wife's tongue :

The Story of Freda Vore 81

While dreamily, within the magic
of the summer night's expanse
I watch the flames fantastical
among the shadows dance,

As far off, somewhere in the vague,
a figure dances now
To a wild Sequoian music, and
she is not conscious how
Strange are the eyes upon her,
for the watching circle fills
With the secret of her life among
these Californian hills.

For you that have not seen her dance
at Bath or Baltimore,
At Paris or at Petrograd,
Sydney or Singapore,
I've written as I heard it told
this tale of Freda Vore.

Margaret Rheam's Narrative

I

WITH no one but myself, you'll think
that I am lonely here :
But the trees are friendly to me,
and I'm maybe, a bit queer,
For often the place itself seems kind
with the good presences
Of them that used to live with me.
—Smile at it, if you please.

My mother was from the County Cork
and had the eyes to see
Things my father would not credit,
and you would not, maybe.
For father, he had the sense, and oft
when he had me on his knee,
He'd smile across at mother and say :
' God's earth will do for me !
Things that have wings on them,' he'd say
' are proper in the sky,
But you and me and the children
won't want them till we die.'

2

I'd married Eli twenty years
before this Freda came :
A motherless thing : her father gave her
nothing but a name,
And dropped her then, and disappeared,
just drifting down the coast :
And Eli built the shack yonder
with his last dollar almost,
Because upon the fat low-lying
lands she would never thrive,
But here in the mountains all her baby
body came alive :
Till like a merry bird she was
with chirps and flutterings
In and out of the door—that often
I'd fancy she had wings,
And laugh to myself, minding
how father'd use to say

The Story of Freda Vore 83

Wings were proper in the sky :
for here we seemed half-way,
Taking the sun, the clouds beneath us
many an autumn day.

3

' Freedom '—she'd use to call herself,
always ; and with round eyes
Wonder at me or anyone
would call her otherwise :
And with round eyes of wonder
that looked through you, she would tell
Strange things that, as she looked at me
were not impossible :

How here her mother came and sat
talking with her ; and there,
Every morning, early, fairies
danced a round with her.

You wouldn't look in Freda's face
to disbelieve ; and when
Eli would hear of it, he'd say,
' There's things are hid from men :
We've screwed our eyes so tight, we'll never
more than half see again.'

4

I tell you, there were strange places
she'd have it she had been :
Neighbourly, in the wood, but places
I had never seen :

And people in them, never lived
upon these hills of ours,
But were as natural to her
as the grasses and the flowers.

Tom Sparrow might have known their names
out of his college books,
But Freda knew them face to face
in the manzanita nooks :
Met them as you might butterflies,
lizards and grasshoppers,
In the columbines and mariposa
lilies and junipers :
I'd wonder, but I couldn't doubt
those big round eyes of hers.

5

I never shook my head at them,
for this is what I thought :—
Her robin-eyes catch sight of things
my dull eyes never caught :
And if this dew of wonder dries
up in the full of noon,
And these she sees fade to a dream,
'twill follow all too soon :
And either soon her wings will fail
and she must walk demure,
Or they will grow to great pinions
and carry her off, for sure.

The Story of Freda Vore 85

But if they grow to angels' wings
and carry her away,
They will be hers for happiness,
and I'd not have her stay :
And if they carry her off, maybe
they'll bring her back one day.

6

Her eyes were clear, and clear was she
as any rill that trebles
Among the royal-fern, and washes
red and ivory pebbles :
As she was white and red : but the hot
sun would ripe and mellow
Her all too quick : our little maid
too soon would find a fellow.

So 'twas that this Tom Sparrow came.
He was a lad well-up
At college, and a likely lad
whenever he would stop
His clattering tongue, and give the kind
heart that he had, a second
To do a hand's turn in the house.
Tom was no fool, we reckoned ;
But always hotfoot on a scent,
and always losing it
He was ; that should have found it
if he'd only had the wit
To hold his gab and wait on her :
but never could he wait :

Too nimble Tom was ! worse for him
I think, than being too late.
Forever pouring out, with eager
words and leaping eyes :
Oh he was quick !—but she was quiet
Freda was, and wise.

Yet she would never talk to him
as she would talk to us,
But stand and smile at him, indulgent-
like and humorous.

7

Because the lad was motherless
as she, and never could
Mind himself, Freda took him, and
thank God ! I understood,
For all she was so different,
yet now that she was grown,
She was a woman needed
a man to be her own.

Maybe, I thought, she'll make of Tom
the one to mate herself ;
For he set more by Freda than
the books upon his shelf :
And with his Aristotle and
his Plato, who but he
Would understand her talk of things
were always Greek to me ?

The Story of Freda Vore 87

8

But I think she never told him, or
if any word she said
'Twas that last night she came
all strange, to me, a-bed.

Crushed she was, like a bit of fern
someone has trod upon.
Never a word of Tom : but I knew
when I saw her, Tom was gone.

Broken she was, and clinging to me
like a child is lost :
Or a woman gone with child, has been
frightened with a ghost.

Was never any word of him
between us : never a word
Of that terrible dark night
that gave us back our bird.

And there's none knows but Freda, where
or why Tom Sparrow went :
None ever heard what he said to her,
or knew the thing he meant :
Or how the innocent joy of her
he had so quickly spent.

9

She had come back a listless thing
you'd hardly know was there
Till she began complaining
when the sun fell on her chair.
Never a hand's turn in or out
the place would she be at,
And she not carrying child, just empty.—
To see her sit like that,
I'd sometimes be beside myself :
but then Eli would say,
' Mother, it's half of Freda
they've left us, anyway ;
Maybe the better half of her
will come back to us yet !'
But on a day, he wouldn't come
within the house to set.
And Freda noticed that. She slipped
away, and no word said,
So quietly, we never missed her
till time came for bed.

All the night, Eli searched the hills,
and all that dreadful night
I was begging her back again.—
He came in the early light
Alone : he had found her in the woods,
but no, she would not come
Until I went, near heart-broken
for her, and fetched her home.

The Story of Freda Vore 89

Meekly she came back, but O,
she had no pleasure when
We brought her home, and by the fireside
she was safe again :
That night in my heart I doubted
if we had her back again.

10

O, it was not for pity's sake
I lay awake, but fear !
There was a something, smelling, smelling
round the house : I'd hear
It in and out the porch, and at
the windows, smelling round ;
Till now it comes in turn to Freda's :
I can hear the sound
Stop at Freda's window.
It flashes through my mind
How she lies there unprotected,
for the window has no blind,
And it is staring in at her
with a meaning in its stare !
Quickly, I lit the candle
and was in beside her there :
But it was only like the corpse
of Freda lying there.

11

The sniffing thief, the snatching thief
was waiting just without.
Well I knew he was not alone :
we were beset about

As it might be with the Redmen,
but these more treacherous,
Lurking in the night to snatch
Freda away from us. . . .

I left the candle by her head
and the chamber-door wide.
Dashing water from the ewer
over Eli's face, I cried,
' Quick ! we've got to save her now :
-they've come for her, and she
Can nothing do against them. Quick !
Come with me, as you be !
We've got to have her in, and pack
the place so full of prayer
They can't come in.' He went with me ;
we carried her in there,
She numb and heavy with dead sleep.
We laid her in the bed
Between us two, and hardly knew
was she alive or dead ;
Whether we were in time at all,
or she already dead.

12

Then upon Eli and on me
a power of praying came.
With the tears and sweat running,
by the feeble candle flame,

The Story of Freda Vore 91

For hours we fought the evil powers
and put them to the proof,
With all the love in earth and heaven
gathered beneath our roof.

It pushed whatever else was there
out and away ; till when
Fear vanished, Eli blew the candle
out, and I slept then,
Holding her in my arms, close.
But before I slept, I knew,
With my hands upon her head,
a power come streaming through,
To charge the empty body of her
with courage of life anew.

13

Holding her in that love, we fell
asleep on either hand.
I woke to the birds singing
and day over the land,
And Eli looking down at her
asleep. But I declare
There were birds in the chamber, singing
their carols over her ;
And Freda, her lips open to
the happiness in the air.—
Soon she wakened. From the kitchen,
listening, I could hear

Her making happy sounds. Then—silence.
I began to fear.
But when I looked about, she
was bringing Eli in
From the woodshed to me, and I heard
her blessed voice begin :
' I want us to thank God. It's
my birthday.' On the boards
We just knelt down together, silent.
there was no need of words.
But a beam of light fell on her head ;
she burst out singing then
As though she never could be done
singing for joy again ;
Not words, just singing, like the birds
in the first autumn rain.

14

The change in her ! 'Twas like the kelp
between the ebb and flow.
Dry it is : limp and useless : but
no sooner comes the flow
Whispering to it, than it plumps
out, and is all astir !
Stranded out of her element
you'd have never thought 'twas her :
Nobody seeing her like that,
could have known Freda Vore.—
And ' it's that way with us all,' she said,
' we're just kelp on the shore,

The Story of Freda Vore 93

When it's low-tide on the beaches of
the world ; but comes the flow
Murmuring up and all about us,
we can reach out and grow.

' For if we are the stranded kelp,
love is the brine, and creeps
All among us, welling up
out of its ocean deeps.

' It's low tide now, but it's at turn :
I feel love creeping up
The desolate beaches of the world :
and it will never stop
Till all the helpless people
lying there, know suddenly
The thing they have forgotten—
the wonder of the sea—
Full of voices, all about them.
They think they are alive
And wonder why, do what they may,
they never seem to thrive.

' For it's only with the tide of love
about you,' Freda said,
Laughing, ' that you ever are
less than three parts dead.
For the tide of the sea, to the sea-kelp is
water and air and bread ! '

15

'Last night,' she said, 'I lay
on the rocks at Monterey.
Long the sea had left me
lying there, and gone away.

'I had forgot the sea. Someone
came along the strand ;
A bag on his shoulder,
a knife in his hand :
He was come for me. I could
feel him tug at me
With fierce hands. But, with a sound
I remembered, suddenly,
Came something in the dim light
sweeping up the beach.
He dropped his knife, let go of me :
he ran out of reach
Of the wild glad wonder that
was sweeping up the beach.

'The tide was all about me.
Between two rocks I swung,
Quiet on its ocean-heave,
quiet, as it flung
Over all the sand one splendid
wave and then another,
That pushed down the bare rocks
underneath its smother.'—

Interval

THE boughs blazed, and for awhile
I could hear my old white mare
Browsing the thin grass yonder,
beyond the flickering flare :—

And I said—‘ After she came back,
tell me, what of her wings ?
Was it soon she was lost to you
and these familiar things ?

‘ What was she like as a woman grown ?
And what the deeds she did
‘ Coming and going among the worlds,
unchallenged and unbid ? ’

For my mind was troubled with pondering
upon my gossip’s tale :
But she babbled on like a mountain rill
whose waters never fail :
And as I listened I watched the moon
among the tree-tops sail.—

Margaret Resumes

I

FREDA was with us after that
seven winters : every day
Her happiness came new again,
and how the world was gay
With her always in and out the stoop !
But quiet, as the light
That floods the air on these mountain ranges
with clouds mountainy white.

There was a music in her, but
not many words, and those
Always her own, and different
from what you would propose.
And they would have good sense ; you
could act on what she said.
There was a power of helpfulness
inside her little head,
That matched the way she handled a thing
with fingers that were quick
To its meaning. Freda was the woman
it would be hard to trick !

No nonsense in her : nothing loud,
but just as full of fun
As a squirrel she was : and yet a woman
not to be put upon.
And a wise woman with babes, as any
mother in the hills could tell.
But the pious ones, and the clergy,
didn't like her over well.
They'd never pick on her for the one
would be likely to know
The saints of heaven, or up along
the ways of it to go.

But They maybe have use for folk
are good at doing things
And generous with themselves, before
your creeds and church-goings :

They maybe valued Freda for
the honesty she was,
That couldn't be but just herself,
—or for some other cause—
Whatever 'twas, 'tis very sure
of Freda They were fond,
Or why would They be taking her
to the places up beyond,
And shewing her plain what all the priests
keep wrapped in a mystery ?
Ah, sure, it must have been because
They loved her company !
And wouldn't it seem as good to the saints
in glory as 'twas to me ?

2

Then, I warrant, there are but few
can do as Freda could—
Slip her body, like a frock.
Naked of it she stood,
Many a night : mother-naked
of it, and ready so
In and out of the world with
those Travellers to go.

With nobody else at all : she was
particular enough !
It was always with Them on business
and good business, she was off.

Sometimes, it was to folk in shame,
that you and I'd condemn,
Into brothels, into madhouses
and gaols, she went with Them,
Just for courage, and to fill the room
where she would stand unseen,
With the clean-blowing breath of the open,
because herself was clean.

And if she was dismayed, beside her
was all the heavenly band
That brought her there ; and in the dark
she would hold out her hand
To them that were with horror mixed
until she could not tell
Them hardly from the shame they did
or draw them from their Hell :
And what the love of God can make
of such, 'tis hard to tell.

3

Once, with her body asleep in bed—
it had no need of her—
Freda came out of it into the night :
She left it lying there :
For she was aware, beside her there,
Of something that needed her.

Someone that stood in the darkness
and beckoned her up from bed.

The Story of Freda Vore 99

‘ But you shall come to-night with us
without your body,’ he said.
They left her body asleep in the bed :
it had no need of her.

—But the other left a word on its mouth
before they went away,
Would keep it ready for her return
and empty where it lay.—

She went with them who were waiting her
out in the world beyond,
As words go with the meaning
to which they correspond. . . .

Anon they come, flying so light,
to a place Freda could tell ;
To a dark place in the night,
but she saw the shape of it well :
A bleak cottage upon a heath,
And a corpse the tiles beneath.

Sat a boy the bed beside ;
Grieved, as only a young child may.
Yesterday his mother died.
She is ready to take away.—
To take away and hide to-morrow.
Secret in the earth to lay,
Forgetful of his sorrow.

And for that he is not ready :
that he cannot bear.
Beside him, flame-like, steady,
she stands with Freda there.

They are standing in the room.—
' Because you are living and I am dead,
Love has fetched us both, to come
and comfort him,' she said.

' Touch his forehead. Touch his eyes
That see me not ! You can surprise
Him, sorrowing, with sight of me.
If you touch him, friend,' says she.

Freda touched him with her breath—
She unseen. But smiling on him
Stood the other, clean of death,
And her wonder came upon him.
He lifted up his head :
He ceased to see her dead.

Then it was she took Freda's hand :
drew her, with herself, away :
Above, across the sleepy land,
home, where her body lay.

As words go with the meaning
to which they correspond,
Freda had travelled the world, she had
no need to go beyond.

And as, when once the meaning's said,
the word falls silent, then
Freda woke happy in her bed
within her flesh again.

4

But often it was far and out
from lands of earth, she went,
To upper places, where the folk
live all-ways different :

And her Company would help her, going
there and coming thence,
How to breathe and act, and how to take
each change and difference,
Where the ways of this world do not serve,
and every breath grows stranger,
And you go out from door on door
to danger after danger. . . .

It's a road I'd never manage,
for it's quick you've got to be,
And learn each new step on the tick :
no kind of road for me !

And Freda knew that : but she'd say
' Marg'ret, I couldn't go
If you and Eli hadn't loved me
so my wings would grow :

' For I've been strange,' she'd say, ' to what
others would have me be,
But you would never seem to want me
different from me.

' You'd never cut my stories short
but always give them heed :
And while you listened, I was growing
the confidence I need
To travel on my voyages
between the worlds, and yet
Come back and gather up the joy
earth has for me to get. . . . '

5

Were nights I'd dream she was a bee
upon the seven high hills,
Sucking the flower of happiness
by the immortal rills :

What story could she tell of it ?
She could but bumble in
Earth's blossoms of the heavenly
that are their natural kin :

And from those hills of happiness,
—small, honey gatherer,—
Carry upon her bee-feathers
a pollen down with her
Would dust those earthly blossoms
that they'd grow lovelier.

6

It wasn't always she was happy.
Maybe, she took too much
Happiness to hold it. Shining,
wondering, her touch

The Story of Freda Vore 103

Silky to soothe your pain—her eyes
would shine away your gloom.
But she was not always happy.
I guess there is not room
In any heart, for more joy
than a little, is there more,
Either a babe is born of it,
or it will burst out-door
Of the body. For a narrow place
turns happiness to madness.
Can you break a heart with sorrow?
You can break a heart with gladness.
And all the joy of God, almost,
was bursting Freda's heart :
Joy that would brim the whole world up,
and she so small a part. . . .

If only I'd a-understood,
I might have eased her some.
Often she'd try to tell me,
And the words would not come :
But just—' If I could tell them,'
she would moan : ' could only tell '—
Then, babble, babble, babble—
so eager, for a spell,
Her eyes flaming with love, her hands
burning ; and she would creep
Up close to me, for love to ease
her heart and let her weep.

7

But against a pious fool,
or any one was speaking ill
Of freedom, suddenly her eyes
would flash like cutting steel :
—Or, Eli'd say, ' a charge rammed down ;
and let him touch the trigger,
She'd blow him into smithereens
before he'd time to figure ! '—

He'd have been mad that touched her then :
the devil himself would get
Out of her way that minute !
but the minute after it,
She'd be a fern-frond half-uncurled,
you couldn't touch without
Crushing, or hardly breathe upon
with the least breath of doubt.

And always about freedom, she
would flash into a flame :
It was the full of living,
and did any give it blame
Or hold love in, or be content
lacking the spring of it,
Nothing he boasted of would Freda
value at half-a-bit :
And as for faith, she'd say, a man
was crippled, wanting it.

She, with her heaven-climbing wings !
It was all years ago,
In the spring of the world, before the east-wind
 blasted the orchard-blow ;
For all was promise, all was hope
 of gathering, before
That day of wrath when out of Europe
 beat up the clouds of war,
And peace broke.—Tom said Freda's name
 meant peace.—And joy was killed.
Tatter of petals on the ground
 and hail the air filled.

No peace was there in the world then ;
 and 'twas she suffered worst,
Breathing the horror in the air,
 the demons of blood-thirst
Chasing her, sleep or waking : kings'
 fool-pride, and kaiser's fears,
Murdering of the young men,
 blasting o' the ripe of years.

By day and night, do what she might,
 the writhing pain of earth
Writhed in her, that she overlaid
 hope, she had brought to birth.

For mixed she was in the mire of death,
 her faith and freedom were
Spent to a cent on liberty :
 was nothing left for her.
She kept herself nothing at all : and now
 Terror crept close to her.

9

Walled in with heavy sleep, I lay.
Sudden I woke, and knew
Terror beside her standing.—Vainly,
hurrying then, I drew
Freda to me in that double dark.
Too late, too late I woke.
O, it was Freda I had in my arms,
but Freda with wings broke.

The wings of her courage were broken :
they would carry her no more
Up those airy wonderful ways
across the heavenly floor.
Wing-broken, she was terrified
of the paths she took before.

10

But last summer, there came up
two campers to our hill.
At evening-time, the dusk
with music they would fill.
Freda drew to them. She'd stand
and drink the music, swaying
As she drew in the draughts of it :
nothing to them saying.
'Twas the woman came for Freda
to be with them while she sang.
Up between her and those two
an understanding sprang.

The Story of Freda Vore 107

How the music drew her up !
Lifting her arms, she stood,
Stepping to it, to and fro,
to and fro in the wood.
Here where about the big trees make
a space among them, wide
For dancing in, she'd seem to float
like a sea-weed on the tide.
And they would keep the music up
that she was floating in :
Buoyed up on it she was, and happy
as she and it were kin.

They hardly stayed the summer out.
Ere ever it was spent,
Freda went away with them :
to the city she went.

Her eyes were full of wondering :
' But I must go with it.
The music is come for me,' she said,
' and I belong to it.'

And back she never looked, nor wasted
herself with idle talk.
In earth, or out of earth, she kept
the way she had to walk.
And do you think that I or Eli
would hold her here, or balk
Freda from the path we'd maybe
readied her to walk ?

Wherever in the world she is,
and in whatever land,
Wouldn't we be together now
if I put out my hand ?

But for me and Eli getting old,
now what has that to say
To the purpose Freda is, for which
we put her on her way ?
Dear knows, and Freda knows, I never
wanted for her to stay. . . .

After Thought

WHEREVER harbours bitterness
in hearts of men, goes she.
She only dances. She only comes
and dances, and some sets free.
Only, in a way of her own,
comes into their bitterness,
Quietly, with herself, and sets
some from bitterness free. . . .

Whenever I see Freda Vore
dance, I see the face
Of an old woman in the firelight
in a far away place :
And the place Freda dances in,
fire-lit among great trees,
Ruddy and sombre, and brimful
of ancient mysteries.

The Story of Freda Vore 109

And I know whence the music came—
the song that's like a bird's,
The playing that is wings to her :—
I hear again the words
Of Margaret Rheam, who fostered her :
and when I see her droop
Her head, with hands folded, I see
again the cottage-stoop ;
I hear the crickets under the moon ;
I smell the boughs burning ;
I feel in my heart the wonder
with which her heart is yearning.

When a shadow she stands amid the shadows,
attending on the sound,
I see a slim mariposa-lily
on a windy upland ground,
Waiting the touch of the first sunbeam
that runs with swift feet
Down the Sierras.—Now she takes
the music, drinking it :
Opens to it her lips and eyes :
her arms she opens wide,
Enters into its crystal world :
nothing to joy denied,
Sunbeam, she stands : the singing wings
a-hover over her :
She catches them under her arms,
mounting upon them, there ;
Breasting the music, taking it
into her bosom : now
She is the spring of the song of her dancing,
and I seem to know how.

2. The Song of Freda's Dancing

HERE, I wait, where the trees are old :
Here I wait, where the light is young,
Till one I wait for is ready to bid me
Breathe his breath and to speak his tongue.

Who, among the creatures of earth,
Who, among the shadows of light,
Will welcome me, stranger, will give me birth,
Will be the body for my delight ?

I have been here from earliest morn :
I have waited, reaching eagerly out
My hands to the world's inhabitants,
—I cannot enter : I wait without.

Name I have not, I seek a name.
Voice I have not, lacking your voice.
I am not a word, I am meaningless :
But O, I could in your heart rejoice !

Nay, you already are brim with joy !
Nay, you already are occupied
In every chamber with busyness :
—Still my longing remains denied.

Yet it may be, someone will come.
 Yet it may be, someone will bring
 A heart hither with an empty chamber
 Wherein I, that am dumb, may sing. . . .

You !—are you come to me hither at last ?
 You !—are you come to me hither apart
 Prepared for delight you have not discovered ?
 I am ready to fill your heart.

I, that am silent since time began,
 I, that am silent, obscure, remote,
 Leap to you that are ready to sing—
 I am already in your throat.

I, the song you came hither to seek,
 I, the joy you came hither to find :
 The wonder that earth has waited for you
 To sing to her, waiting, time out of mind.

3. Silence

FROM hours preoccupied, a robin's twitter
 Will open a door : a white cathedral tower
 Lift suddenly to the height from the street's litter
 Your spirit : or, unexpected, Silence touch
 Your hand, and stay your pen mid-line, that ran
 So nimbly on and on, while all the day
 That silence waited for your pen to stay,
 For you to feel her waiting in the room.

Less busy than you were to profit, I
Watched Silence as she stood beside your chair
Attending hour by hour, till now she bids
Me whisper to you : ' See ! Silence is there.'

Awile I wondered, watching her beside
You, unperceived of you, and seeing her eyes
So deep with what you did not write, so strange
To what your pen was writing—whether 'twas wise
With her so near, to be so occupied :
But when I saw your eyes shine, and the page
Fill with your faith, although it was not hers
That seemed to wait for you, I understood
Her waiting : as you, friend, whose arm I touch
Gently, will understand that now I must.

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